Status Quo After King-

By Jim Bishop

The money appropriated by the House Select Committee on Assassinations amounts to stealing. Nothing was accomplished. No sinister figure was uncovered behind the guns of Lee Harvey Oswald and James Earl Ray.

Bishop

The "mover" is a lawyer named Mark Lane. He is a graying beard who wears a mild and innocent expression some of the time but who is given to shouting rages when congressmen try to toss a little light into his shadows.

Mr. Lane has achieved fame writing books about the assassinations of President Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. He excites my envy because where I find fact, Lane sees doubt. This time he aroused the Black Caucus in the House of Representatives by suggesting that James Earl Ray didn't kill King. Who did it? Who knows — maybe the FBI?

The House didn't want to fund the committee. A caucus of 16 members, aided by the beautiful widow, Coretta King, and the Rev. Jesse Jackson, lobbied Speaker of the House Thomas O'Neill into granting a few million to "probe" both deaths.

The Black Caucus was not interested in finding out who killed John Kennedy. The unspoken word came down that they would have to try to solve that one or forget the King death. They accepted the assignment.

As an interested observer I felt that the goal of the committee was to hang the Kennedy assassination on the CIA and the King death on the FBI. They hoped to capitalize on the nation's current distrust of both agencies.

They sent investigators winging all over the United States looking for clues. Mark Lane, as attorney for James Earl Ray, was permitted to suggest persons and places. I waited for a phone call.

It came. The caller said he was an investigator for the House committee. He didn't want to give his name. He said he knew that I was the only author who had researched both cases: "The Day Kennedy Was Shot" and "The Days of Martin Luther King Jr."

He asked how much time I had spent digging the facts. Four years on Kennedy; three on King. I asked if I could send copies of both books. No thanks. They had copies. He'd be in touch.

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Kennedy Investigation

I did not blame the committee for not wanting to hear from me. We cannot permit truth to wreck a scenario. I reminded the anonymous investigator that both books would have been runaway best sellers if only I had found a suspicion that the CIA or the FBI had plotted the assassinations.

"Yeah," he said vaguely. "You'd have made a potful of money," I assured him that every clue I found in Dallas led directly to Oswald and nobody else. Did he know that the FBI had their own man in the Texas Communist Party? Did he know that Lee was a loner who refused to join the party?

In Memphis I stood in the bathtub where Ray lounged to fire the shot which caught Dr. King in the lower jaw and tore through his spine. As other writers did before and since, I went back through James Earl Ray's childhood and prison record. He came up dumb. He could louse up a two-car funeral.

I believed then — and believe now — that a consortium of racists paid Ray to fire the shot. At this point, I have no facts. My tracking shows that Ray lived high for the first time in his life six months before the shooting.

He bought a new car. He had money in the bank. He bought the wrong gun at Birmingham Airport and, within an hour, was on the phone pleading that he wanted to exchange it for a powerful rifle with a scope.

Afterward, he was running for Rhodesia. Ray would not know that the U.S. had no extradition treaty with that nation. He couldn't spell Rhodesia. The fatal flaw in James Earl Ray's plan was that he didn't find out the real name (or names) of the people who employed him.

The assassination committee hoped to hang the crime on the FBI. All they had to go on was the knowledge that J. Edgar Hoover refused to hire a Negro agent no matter how well qualified. He once promoted a black chauffeur to the status of "agent" to pacify his critics.

The Black Caucus maintained that there was an FBI agent at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis when King was shot. Right. Hoover assigned several agents (one at a time) to watch King.

My research—for whatever it is worth—indicates that, as Dr. King was slammed backward against the motel wall in death, the FBI man hurried from his room to phone FBI headquarters with the news. That was his job.

The Black Caucus caused the spending of a lot of public money and accomplished nothing. We are back to square one. The assassination committee shot itself...

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